

**FANCY  
GUPPY  
ASSOCIATION**

**Judges' Training Course  
1978**

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Association Judges' Training Course 1978**

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Foreword

This third edition of the Judges course is an attempt not only to update the information contained in the two previous issues, but also to introduce a greater measure of practical help to the trainee judge. The course has, consequently, been divided into three basic sections: general information; theory; and practical. But the best practical training that any judge can receive is on the bench and, for unqualified trainees, under the supervision of a qualified judge.

Judging guppies could be described as an inexact science - which is something of a contradiction in terms. It is a science because we make measurements and comparisons and we have control factors but it is inexact because we have little control over show conditions or even the condition of the fish being judged. Subjective assessment too has to be made: the intensity of colour is one such.

But the FGA can be proud of the fact that over the years it has refined its training system to an extent where there is little variation in judging standards throughout the country: it is unique among fish-keeping and breeding organisations in that respect.

The standards maintained by FGA judges is of the highest. The aim of this revised course is to ensure that there is never any diminution of that standard.

Henry Vinall  
Chairman  
Judges and Standards Committee

Charter for the FGA Judges' Conference and Judges and Standards Committee

1. The conference shall be convened annually at the time and venue decided on by those qualified (see Rule 2) at the previous year's assembly.
2. The conference shall be limited to the following FGA members:
  - (i) A and B class Judges
  - (ii) Trainee Judges
  - (iii) Section Show Secretaries (one per Section)
  - (iv) Assistant Show Secretaries (one per Section)
  - (v) Members of the FGA Management Committee
  - (vi) Members or others invited at the discretion of either the J & S Committee or Management Committee.
3. Voting at the assembly shall be restricted to those present at the duly convened conference, one vote per person. ONLY those qualified under part 2, section (i) shall have this privilege. In the event of a tied vote, the Chairman shall have the casting vote.
4. The meeting shall be conducted under the auspices of the duly elected Judges and Standards Committee Chairman and Secretary according to the agenda put out by them.
5. EVERY duly paid-up member of the FGA shall have the right to submit proposals and suggestions to the assembly, via the Judges and Standards Secretary.
6. The purpose of the conference is to provide a platform on which can be discussed all matters appertaining to the Show Rules and Standards covering the exhibiting of Fancy Guppies and any decisions or voting conducted at this assembly shall be binding. (Note: See rules 21 and 22 of the Standards Handbook).
7. A Judges and Standards Committee shall be elected annually by those qualified and present at the Judges conference. They shall elect a Chairman or Secretary on alternate years, each to serve for a two-year period, the Chairman to be elected in odd years, the Secretary in even years.

They shall elect a committee of five to serve for a period of one year.

The Chairman shall be an A class Judge; two B class Judges may be elected as Secretary and Committee Member; the other four must be A class Judges.
8. This Committee shall meet at least twice per annum and at any other time as is deemed necessary by its members or the Management Committee.

9. Anybody can be invited to sit on these Committee meetings at the express invitation of the Committee but such invited persons do not have any voting powers.
10. The Judges and Standards Committee will be responsible for the training and examination of all Judges in the Association.
11. They will also be responsible in nominating Judges/adjudicators whom they feel are qualified to undertake the examination of trainee judges. Examination time and venue are to be arranged by the examiner who will ask the relevant Section show secretary's permission to hold the examination and make arrangements as necessary.
12. The Committee have the power to strike from the list of Judges any Judge who fails to qualify by not judging a minimum of six shows per Association year, or relegate such Judges from A to B status, or from B to C status. The committee have the power to strike from the list of Judges any Judge who, in their opinion, has contravened the rules and regulations or damaged the good name of the Association but such a person shall have the right to put his/her appeal personally to the Committee.

Section 1 : GENERAL INFORMATION

Accompanying this Judges Course is a copy of the FGA Standards Handbook which is our Bible. Within its pages are the standard outlines of the Guppies that you are seeking to judge. You MUST familiarise yourself with all aspects of the Handbook, with the Show Rules and with every other subject it covers but, from a judging point of view, you must give precedence to learning each of the outlines. You MUST know what dorsal goes with what caudal. Also of particular importance is the FGA's system of pointing. Various systems have been proposed to replace the five 20s system but none has proved so practical, easy to learn and easy to apply. It is also a system that the non-judge can appreciate and understand so it is our line of communication to the exhibitor in identifying where his fish may be lacking: there is another line of communication, too, but we shall refer to that later. Based on the principle of dividing the total 100 marks (the maximum possible) into five groups of 20 points for the following characteristics: body (size and shape), dorsal (size and shape), caudal (size and shape), colour, and condition and deportment, the system enables every feature of the guppy to be given equal assessment value so that an overall pointing will reflect each salient feature of the fish as a total entity. It will enable you to determine exactly why one fish is better than another and will remove the subjective assessment (e.g. I like that fish, it looks good) from judging practice. You will be judging the fish to a formula to give a precise determination of its strengths and weaknesses. The breakdown of each block of 20 points is given in the Standards Handbook - it is not given on our judging sheets: we expect the judge to know it. And if you do not know it you do not become a judge. One further point with regard to pointing: if the award 15 points out of each block of 20, your total for the exhibit will be 75 points which constitutes a Star award in most cases. You should be conscious of that fact throughout your judging stints but do not let it influence your pointing.

Look, learn and ask

All the outlines in the Standards Handbook are life size (i.e. standard size). This is done purposely so that our members will become familiar with *Poecilia reticulata* as it appears - or hopefully appears - in their tanks. That standard outline is what they are aiming to achieve and what you judge against. It is your sole criterion apart from colour and condition and deportment.

Never be afraid to consult the Standards Handbook when you are judging. Keep it with you when you officiate at shows. From time to time alterations will be made to it which are aimed always at improving guppy breeding and showing. We do not alter the Handbook simply for the sake of change. But when we do make amendments, make sure that you update your copy.

Read, read and re-read that Handbook and this course. This is so important if you are to be fair and accurate in your work.

Remember, practice makes perfect, but all the practice in the world is of no use without a background of sound theory. Ask other judges how they arrive at particular decisions and at all times be inquisitive. There is nothing to be ashamed of in consulting your Standards Handbook or Judges Course, even when you are qualified. It is better to do so than to make a wrong decision which some exhibitor is bound to spot and point out to you.

Remember, if it can be proved that you as a Judge have contravened any of the Show Rules and Regulations, then your decision in that case will be null and void and the class must be judged again.

### Shows

During the course of your career as a judge, you will be asked to officiate at many types of show which can be classified as:

Minor: Table shows at Section meetings at which any FGA member can compete even if they are not members of the particular section. (Incidentally, the expression table show is an historical tag referring to the days when jars were displayed on ordinary tables. Sections now have proper units for displaying entries on the show bench).

Even here, entries ought to be exhibited in regularion show jars but at this sort of show we tend to overlook minor transgressions to help the newcomer and the junior members. Award cards up to fourth place will be given (unless, of course, there are fewer than four entries in a class) and if there are many entries, you will need to gate out a considerable number. (Gating will be described in the practical judging section).

Major: Section Open Shows and the FGA's National Show. Each FGA section can hold up to TWO open shows a year. Because entries are heavy, it would be most unusual if a trainee were allowed to judge, though it is often the case that a trainee will undertake his B class examination at an open show. A class examinations are invariably arranged to be taken at open shows. Judging at open shows is strict.

As with table shows, however, do use the comments section on the judging sheets to make any points that will be helpful to the exhibitor.

The National Show - originally titled the International - has been held every year since 1966 and the majority of FGA members attend and show there. Our major trophies are competed for and there is an inter-Section competition too for the Calgary trophy. All entries gaining more than 70 points have the number of points above 70 added to their Section's score, the winner of the Calgary trophy being the Section thus gaining the most points.

Other: FGA judges are recognised as qualified specialist judges by all major aquatic bodies in the UK. We are often invited to judge at non-FGA shows and it is then up to the invited judge to ascertain whether judging is to be to FGA standards or to other standards. It is preferred that judges try to ensure that FGA standards are used but if other rules are in operation then you must use those. However, in those circumstances it is quite proper for you to be paid a fee for your services which should be not less than £3.

### Examinations

Trainees have to be nominated for examination by either a class A or a class B judge. Class B judges wishing to sit their A class examinations have to be nominated by an A class judge. There are sound reasons for this, the main one being the prevention of ill-equipped trainees taking examinations they are unlikely to pass and so wasting the time of the examiner and the J & S Committee. It also prevents a trainee from becoming disenchanted by failing an examination taken before he is properly prepared.

There are two classes of qualified judge: Class B and Class A. If you pass the B class examination, you are qualified to judge at most FGA shows; when you become an A class judge you can adjudicate at all FGA shows. There is only a subtle distinction: effectively, at the National show, the emphasis is on A class judges, but the J & S committee does invite experienced B class judges too because of the immense workload at that show. But the National show is now virtually the only one at which B class judges can be excluded from judging. It is possible (and was done in the past) that B class judges might be asked NOT to judge at an Open Show if there is a sufficiency of A class judges present. If that is done (and it must be stressed that it would be exceptional) do not be offended. It is perfectly permissible.



Class B Examination: consists of three papers

1. A written examination on all aspects of judging and its associated problems, plus an essay on a major issue.

Duration: one hour of which half is allowed for the essay.

2. A practical test to be taken at any one FGA show at which you will be required to judge nine classes (Master Breeders, one other breeders team, four single male standards, three single female standards). If the required range of classes is not available, the examiner may vary these requirements to include a similar number of classes of equivalent or greater difficulty. You will be expected to fill in the judging sheets and star appropriate entries as if you were a qualified judge. Venue is to be arranged by the examining A class judge.

3. Oral test: You have to give verbal answers to 20 questions on judging practice.

Examiner: Normally, all judges examinations must be adjudicated by an A class judge who must be a member of the J & S Committee. Exception to that can only be granted by the J & S Committee. The adjudicator's markings (and comments in writing) are scrutinised by the J & S Committee Chairman before the result can be ratified.

Class A Examination: COMPRISES TWO PARTS

After officiating at all types of FGA shows possible and in a period of not less than one year and not less than 12 FGA shows from obtaining B class status, and on nomination by an A class judge, you may then apply to the J & S committee to take your A class examination.

Part 1 is a practical test in which you must judge the following 12 classes:

- |                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Advanced master breeders * | 7. Single male broadtail  |
| 2. Master breeders            | 8. Single male short-tail |
| 3. Breeders males             | 9. Single female          |
| 4. Breeders females           | 10. Single female         |
| 5. Breeders matched pairs     | 11. Colour male           |
| 6. Single male broadtail      | 12. Colour female         |

Each class must contain three or more entries with the exception of the Advanced master breeders and the master breeders. The examination must be completed in not more than two shows. Again, the examiner can vary the classes to be judged if circumstances require it.

Part 2: An essay of not less than 300 words on a subject selected by the examiner and/or the J & S Committee\* from the Standards Handbook or the Judges course.

Examiner must be an A class judge and, again, the adjudicator's markings (and written comments) are scrutinised by the J & S Committee before the result can be ratified.\*

Certificates are awarded (and badges - blue for B class, red for A class) to successful candidates. An average of 85% or higher means your certificate will be endorsed "Honours". A pass is awarded for 70% and high

#### Points to watch

The following points are for the student's guidance and do not form part of the Association's rules. If one or more of the points made conflicts with the Association's rules (remember they change from time to time) then the Association's rules ALWAYS take precedence.

1. Trainee judges can sign award cards and can award stars but their signature must always be endorsed by a qualified judge. If no qualified judge is present at the show, the star awards made WILL NOT GO TO THE EXHIBITOR UNTIL the trainee judge has passed his B class examination.\*
2. If you are asked to judge an amalgamated class you should point out to the show secretary that this is not in accordance with show rule 5. YOU WILL NOT THEN JUDGE THE CLASS UNTIL the rules have been complied with.
3. Be willing at all times to explain to exhibitors why you have placed entries in the order that you have and always refer them to any comments you have made on the judging sheet.
4. You may ask the opinion of another judge on any point but when qualified YOU ALONE must place the entries in order and sign the award cards. The exception here is in placing best in show, best male, best female and best breeders. Usually, the senior judges present form an ad hoc committee and make these awards, particularly at open shows. At table shows, do not be surprised even if a class A judge draws a class B judge into determining the fish to receive "best" awards. At all times, the aim is to be fair, and to be seen to be fair.
5. If in doubt, refer to the Standards Handbook, to other judges, and, if appropriate, to the show secretary.

6. A JUDGE MAY JUDGE HIS OWN ENTRIES. We prefer not to do so because our reasons may be misinterpreted by the uninitiated but if necessary, there is no reason why you should not do so. Obviously, if there is another judge present, he should be asked to judge any class in which you have entered fish.
7. Occasionally, you will recognise a fish that you have judged before - or think you have. DO NOT ALLOW PRIOR KNOWLEDGE to influence you. Treat every entry as an exercise in judging and judge the fish as you see it at that time not on its past performance.
8. Do not put up with exhibitors breathing down your neck or watching you judge. Politely ask them to go to the show secretary for an explanation of show rule 2.
9. IGNORANCE OF THE SHOW RULES BY BOTH EXHIBITOR AND JUDGE IS NO EXCUSE FOR BREAKING THEM.

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Section 2: THEORY

Having embarked on this course, you will obviously have an interest in guppies above the normal. Presumably you will have some experience of breeding guppies - we say presumably because it would be quite difficult for those without practical breeding experience to comprehend the finer points of judging. It would not be impossible, of course, but such a judge would be at a disadvantage.

Therefore, we assume that you have a basic knowledge of genetics sufficient to appreciate that unlikely combination of standards should not be entered together in breeders terms, e.g. highly coloured females of broad-tail stock with sword tail males. That, basically, is about the extent of the theoretical knowledge that is required.

Perhaps the experienced judge would agree, however, that one of the major difficulties in judging and teaching judging, comes in explaining basic body colours. This arises in breeders teams entries and it must be borne in mind that the operative word here is MATCHING. An entry that has fish that do not match will be downpointed and that goes just as much for colour (basic body) as for size and shape.

Take as an example the exhibitor who has fish of basic body colour gold and basic body colour grey. At one stage of his breeding programme he will have grey females and gold females and grey males and gold males ALL IN THE SAME BIRTH. But if he were to enter a mixture of golds and greys in a breeders team it would be so downpointed as not to come into the reckoning for a card. BECAUSE THE FISH DO NOT MATCH FOR BASIC BODY COLOUR. Some lines with ordinary half-black males may produce only grey females (without half-black). If other colours match such cases should not be downpointed heavily for matching but some downpointing is appropriate (say 1-2 points) as the breeder may be able to select for half-black females.

There has perhaps been a little confusion where half-black (or three-quarter black) golds are concerned. With these fish the female may not show the half-black and will appear gold: she still matches the males, however, because though the males will appear fairly strongly black or blue towards the caudal peduncle, the BASIC body colour is still gold. Refer to p.15 of the Standards Handbook for further details on basic body colours.

### Historical points

The FGA has been a constantly evolving organisation since its inception - the longest remaining feature having been the five twenties system of judging, though that too has been slightly changed in the approach to judging for colour.

In the Association's earlier days it was considered much harder to breed and bring to maturity (i.e. to a standard size) albino, cream and gold guppies and judges then were asked to bear that in mind when pointing for size. That no longer applies and such fish are judged exactly as any other guppy.

That was probably the only time that the FGA encouraged judges to consider difficulty of breeding as a factor when judging. It is perhaps regrettable that even now, some judges will persist in raising this 'bogey' when awards for 'bests' are being considered. You will occasionally hear a judge say: "Yes, the delta is good, but it is so much harder to put on a good advanced master breeders team and I think they should get the award." RESIST THAT ARGUMENT. It undermines the whole basis of our judging system. A breeders team MUST be compared on a like basis with a single fish when it comes to determining best in show, which means that it must be viewed in terms of matching and of quality of the fish NOT on how difficult it is to get a good multi-fish entry.

Date of birth is not a factor to be considered when judging guppies: the standard is for quality as defined by the Standard and not age. A good young fish still beats a bad ole one or a bad young one. If, however, you are judging at a non-FGA show whose rules specify that date of birth of the fish must be given, give due consideration to the point and use your own experience of the proportionate sizes for ages.

### Diplomacy

In the practical section that follows, the words tact and diplomacy will crop up. You will not get through your years as a judge without some brickbats coming your way but it is how you receive them and deal with adverse criticism that will determine how well you are regarded as a judge. NEVER ARGUE WITH AN EXHIBITOR. Give him the benefit of the doubt wherever possible. His fish are precious - always handle them with care and criticise his entries constructively. ALWAYS BE SURE OF YOUR GROUND. WHEN YOU ARE QUALIFIED, BE PROUD. YOU HAVE ACHIEVED THE EQUIVALENT OF AN EARLDOM IN GUPPYING TERMS.

## Finally

Judging should be an enjoyable and worthwhile pursuit (you get to see more fish and more of them than the ordinary member).

If you do not enjoy your work, then hand in your badge for your own sake, for the sake of exhibitors, and for the Association's sake.

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### Section 3: PRACTICAL NOTES

The foregoing has all been geared to putting you in the picture so far as background information and general knowledge are concerned. What follows is an attempt to guide you to success in your judging examinations, particularly the practical side.

JUDGING IS THE ART OF SELECTING IN ORDER TO MERIT FOR THE PURPOSE OF AN AWARD the best of several entries of a class.

So now you are sitting in front of a show bench with a judging sheet in your hand or on a clip-board ready to judge a class of fish. Show staff will have filled in details such as the Section, date, class and number of entries in the class, each entry being identified by a number. The numbers might not be in sequence and at some shows the class may be identified by a code number. MAKE SURE YOU ARE JUDGING THE CLASS FOR WHICH YOU HAVE THE JUDGING SHEET.

CHECK that your judging sheet contains the right number of entries for jars benched in that class and that the exhibit numbers agree. If there is any discrepancy CHECK with the show secretary immediately - DO NOT start judging the class until the discrepancy has been sorted out.

CHECK that all fish benched in the class are in the right class. If any has been wrongly classified TELL THE SHOW SECRETARY who will ask the exhibitor to re-bench the fish (unless the proper class has already been judged). The show secretary will also tell the exhibitor that disqualification of the entry may result if the advice to re-bench is not heeded. Judges should NOT approach an exhibitor because that can be misconstrued - the show secretary is your liaison man - use him. AT OPEN SHOWS reclassifying entries that have been wrongly benched is normally not allowed if it is the exhibitor's fault. But do be tactful and impress on show secretaries that wherever possible every assistance must be given

to the exhibitor.

**REMEMBER:** Show secretaries are always under pressure during benching and mistakes can happen, so the above checks **MUST** be made.

**GATING:** If there are in any class that you are judging more than half a dozen or so entries, you may need to gate out. The factor to consider here is time available. But do not hesitate to use this method of reducing the number of entries to be pointed. Gating is simply a visual assessment of each entry. Each jar must be viewed (preferably in the same position which means moving jars about so be careful) and entries that are obviously not in the running can be discarded. The remainder should then be pointed.

ON COMPLETION of the points assessment and having re-checked your arithmetic, fill in the totals and first, second, third and fourth, sign the sheet and hand it to the show secretary **IMMEDIATELY**. Do not hang on to the completed judging sheet whilst going on to judge another class and do not walk around with completed sheets because the show staff still have **WORK** to do.

**ALL FISH** should be pointed wherever time and numbers allow.

**COMMENTS COLUMN:** Use the Comments space on the judging sheet, particularly in justification of a decision that might not be clear to an exhibitor. Deportment is a good example: a fish when judged might be completely inactive and drooping on the bottom of the jar. When the owner sees it after judging, the fish may have perked up and be gyrating round the jar in fine style. Always try to be constructive in your comments: draw attention to any defect that might be apparent or to any feed imbalance (bull-chestedness in fish can be a result of overfeeding with protein, for example).

**TIES:** After pointing, you may find that you have a tie for first place. No two guppies are exactly alike, there are always differences and therefore **WE DO NOT** give equal firsts. Re-point the two entries meticulously and get an outright winner. A tie for second, third or fourth place is permissible in view of the time involved in re-judging.

**NEVER** award half points to distinguish places. This is **NOT** allowed because it is bad judging practice. You have 100 points for distribution for each fish, so half measures are not needed. If fish are so similar that they are almost equal, make the difference one full mark.

RESULTS: When you have completed judging a class, arrange the first, second, third and fourth jars in order. This is not obligatory but it does help show staff and those who will be looking at the first after judging is completed. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY then to stick on the coloured stars: RED for first, BLUE for second, YELLOW for third and GREEN for fourth.

STAR AWARDS: If you award 73 points or more for a breeders team that is first in its class, or more than 75 points for a single fish entry, write the word STAR on the judging sheet followed by a question mark. These marks can lead to a star award BUT it is the responsibility of the show secretary to check if the exhibitor is entitled to such an award. You, as the judge, merely draw attention to the possibility.

DISQUALIFICATION: A judge can only disqualify entries as follows:

- (a) Controversion of show rules
- (b) Incorrect number of fish in the jar
- (c) Fish entered in wrong class
- (d) Show jars decorated other than as laid down in Rule 12.
- (e) Sick or diseased fish
- (f) Incorrect water level
- (g) Incorrect containers.

AWARD CARDS are issued down to fourth place. You MUST sign all award cards for the classes that you have judged and whilst you are a trainee your decisions must be ratified by a qualified judge who MUST countersign your award cards. (See also Point 1 under Points to watch in General Information Section).

At FGA shows the final decision ALWAYS rests with the judge but in the event of any dispute a decision can be referred to the J & S Committee for arbitration. THIS HAS NEVER HAPPENED to date because of the trouble we take in training our judges. But the recourse to the J & S Committee is there. We hope that it is never necessary to use it. At other than FGA shows the final decision sometimes is vested in the show secretary. Check the printed show schedule to verify this point.

REMEMBER: If you contravene the show rules your decision is void and the class must be re-judged.



FRY IN THE JAR: Gravid females sometimes give birth in the jar or sometimes an exhibitor will accidentally net fry at the same time as his show fish. ACTION TO TAKE: At a table show, tell the show secretary to inform the exhibitor that in a major show the entry would be disqualified, then point the entry as normal. Look particularly at the condition and deportment of a female because if she has given birth in the jar she will be under par and will need to be downpointed accordingly. Heavily gravid females ought not to be on show either and, again, should be downpointed for condition. Draw the attention of the exhibitor to this in the Comments section on the judging sheet. At a major show, if the fry are noticed during benching and before judging, ask the show secretary to get the exhibitor to remove the fry from the jar. If they are not removed or judging has already started, DISQUALIFY THE ENTRY. Again, give your reason in the Comments section.

DIRTY SHOW JARS: No show rule exists to cover dirty show jars but none of us likes them. Tell the show staff to point out the condition of the jar to the exhibitor. IF YOU CANNOT SEE THE FISH PROPERLY how can you assess it? Show your distaste by your comment on the judging sheet. This is perhaps one of the few occasions when you can dispense with tact!

NON-STANDARD JARS: Keep the beginner in mind - he might not have had the opportunity to obtain regulation show jars or to make them. Ignore this aspect at table shows but do point it out to the show secretary at major shows. You can disqualify an entry at a major show if the container is not of glass and not flat-sided. Perhaps the best criterion here is whether or not you can fairly judge the fish in the container in which they are presented. Use your discretion and be diplomatic.

JAR DECORATION: Lids of show jars should be read (they can be painted red if they are metal and self-coloured red if plastic). Jar bases can be clear or they can be painted black. NO OTHER DECORATION IS ALLOWED. There must be no gravel or plant of any kind in the jar and no markings of any kind other than identification labels used by the show staff. In a major show DISQUALIFY ANY ENTRY that contravenes this rule.

WATER LEVEL must be just below the shoulder of the show jar. With "home-made" containers as specified by the Association and accepted for showing purposes, the water level should be about 1 inch from the top of the container. Failure to comply can result in an entry being disqualified.

WATER COLOUR: Make due allowances for slight discoloration of water (i.e. treat as normal) but do not allow any coloration that may affect your effort to judge an entry. If a fish needs medication, then it is a sick fish and should be judged accordingly.

SEX REVERSALS: There have been instances of fully grown female guppies appearing to develop male characteristics and these oddballs may occasionally appear on the bench. However, by using hormones, today's breeder can produce this result 'synthetically'. If you come across such monstrosities on the bench they are easily recognised and because they are usually sterile or mules they are not to be encouraged. Show by your pointing and remarks why. Those entered as males usually high fish, lacking in colour and nearly all have pronounced arched backs and undeveloped gonopodia. Highly coloured females with much body colour and poorly developed gravid spots can represent early stages in the change. See show rule 23.

COLOUR FEEDING: This is perhaps less common than it used to be but again the use of hormones for colour enhancement (particularly of females) is not unknown. More common perhaps is the feeding of proprietary colour foods in which such substances as carotin are used. It is up to the exhibitor to see that the fish he benches are the biggest, brightest, most active and best standard shape that he can achieve. There is no rule against artificial stimulation of colour but again show rule 23 is relevant. Judge the fish as you see them.

#### MORE ON THE POINTING OF ENTRIES

Make sure that each fish you judge has two eyes, seven fins, and is alive. This may seem obvious but a fish that has only one eye is likely to keep that eye on you whilst you are judging and you could miss the empty socket away from you.

If you believe a female is heavily gravid and wish to make sure unscrew the lid of the jar and look over the top - the bulge in the female's flanks will tell you the truth of the matter. This practice of viewing entries from the top of the jar will also reveal some kinds of best spine.

#### Judging males (single fish)

In theory, every entry starts off with no points at all and builds up points according to its nearness to the standard outlines, to its colour and condition and deportment. However, most judges work in the opposing direction: they downpoint for faults. Only in pointing for colour do they add up the points! This is more clearly demonstrated later in the course

when a practical judging exercise is given, using the delta outline as an example. Judging of single fish - male and female - follows the same order always: Body (shape and size), dorsal (shape and size), caudal (shape and size), colour, and condition and deportment. Each section is worth a maximum of 20 points.

### Body

The single male should be  $1\frac{1}{8}$  in. long as an ideal. Compare the fish that you see with the standard outline in the Handbook. Ten points are available for the size of the body and ten points for shape. A fish might exceed the standard size but often that is accompanied by a distortion in shape and a good, but smaller, male will often beat the larger fish purely because of its better proportions. But if a fish is larger and in proportion then it must get higher points.

### Dorsal fin

The dorsal fin of the male guppy is quite distinctive in each class and the wrong dorsal associated with a particular caudal is a serious fault and your points should reflect that. Other faults such as ragged or split fins are dealt with later.

### Caudal Fin

This determines the class in which the male is entered. Check the dimensions against the standard and check the proportions too. Ten points are awarded for shape and ten for size exactly as with the dorsal fin. BEAR IN MIND, however, that finnage shape may well have a bearing on finnage size and vice versa: if the fin is the wrong shape then it is possibly also the wrong size so the total points for finnage faults can be equally divided between shape and size.

### Colour

Five points are available for body colour, five for dorsal colour, five for caudal colour and five for overall intensity of colour. Number of colours are immaterial: you are looking for the area of colour in the body and fins and you then add to that the appropriate points out of five for intensity of colour, which is perhaps the most difficult of all decisions to make. DO NOT BE INFLUENCED BY PATTERNS. Snakeskin is not a colour: it may have pretty patterns and zebrinus stripes BUT it is the area of colour that is important and the intensity. If only one-fifth of the dorsal carries colour, only one point can be awarded there. If the whole of the caudal is coloured then five points will be awarded. If the overall effect is brilliant, show it by the number of points you award for

intensity. Conversely, if the fish's colour appears pale, insignificant, or just plain washed out, show that too by awarding low points for intensity. Remember, iridescent colours (greens and blues particularly) only show to full advantage in oblique top light, while solid colours such as red and black are not affected by direction of light. Be prepared to move an entry to see it in the best light.

### Condition and Deportment

Condition is soundness of body and fins. Downpoint or disqualify if the fish is ailing (e.g. if it has cysts, fungal infection, scales missing etc.). Downpoint for split or ragged fins. Ten points are available for condition and ten for deportment. Deportment reflects the carriage and behaviour of the fish. If it hides away in a corner of the jar, leave it and return to look at it again. If it is still not showing itself, it cannot be judged properly and you should reflect this in the comments section. A fish that spreads its fins well, disports itself in the jar, is eager and aware and obviously bursting with health - then he gets high marks.

### DOUBLE SWORDS

A serious fault in double swords, and one which your pointing should reflect, is unequal length of swords. Down-point heavily. The same applies to lyre tails.

### Judging females (single fish)

Virtually the same procedure is followed as for males. Points to watch for are a break or droop in the top outline of the body between the tip of the nose and the nape: this is snouting and should be regarded as a serious fault. A break in the lower outline between the chin and the stomach is bull-chestedness which, however, is more common in males. Again, downpoint heavily.

### Colour

In the case of clear-finned females, points are awarded for LACK of colour and any smudges or patches of colour should be penalised by down-pointing. Completely clear fins should receive full marks for colour.

### Judging Breeders Teams

Where one entry requires more than one fish, this shall be considered a breeders team. Grade 1 breeders is being phased out and will no longer be an FGA class after December 31, 1978. Consequently, we are ignoring this class for the purposes of the training course. The following are recognised FGA breeders classes:

1. Advanced master breeders comprising single male, single female, four matched males, four matched females, two matched pairs.
2. Master breeders comprising single male, four matched males, two matched pairs.
3. Breeders males comprising four matched males.
4. Breeders females comprising four matched females.
5. Breeders matched pairs comprising two matched females and two matched males as matching pairs.

All the above shall be from the same strain and of the same basic body colour.

Though it is usual in advanced master breeders to bench the entry in five jars, and in the master breeders in three jars, it is permissible for the exhibitor to put the matched females in two jars IF THE ENTRIES ARE OF A SIZE THEY THEY WOULD BE CRAMPED IN A SINGLE JAR. Less unusually but still permitted is to split the matched males into two jars and the matched pairs into two jars.

Again, in breeders females, the exhibitor can use two jars each containing two females if the size of the fish warrants it. Advanced master breeders is pointed on five separate judging sheets. Master breeders is pointed on three separate sheets.

Matching is a most important factor in breeders classes and 20 points are available for this feature. In AMB and MB, matching must be equal throughout all the jars and the same pointing for matching appears on each of the judging sheets. Then the entry is broken down into its component parts (i.e. single male, single female, breeders males, breeders females, and matched pairs) and each is pointed separately. At the end, the total points are added up and divided by 5 (for AMB) and by 3 (for MB) to arrive at the appropriate points for the particular entry. Check your maths - it is so easy to add in the jar number by mistake! If in the case of AMB or MB you find you have fractions (or decimals) take the points to the nearest whole number: for example, 75.6 would appear as 76; 75.1 as 75; and 72.5 would be 73. That last one should perhaps be explained: remember, we give the exhibitor the benefit of the doubt and we are always tactful/diplomatic so 73 NOT 72. Half way, take it up. Below half way, down.

Breeders teams must be carefully matched for size and shape of body and finnage and for basic body colour and finnage colour. Again, ignore minor variations in finnage colour and secondary body colour. It is the overall matching with which you need to be concerned and no guppies match dot for dot. A well-matched team of medium sized guppies will beat a large ill-assorted team.

WATCH for the odd fish used as a filler to make up a team. If one fish in a team of four is smaller than the rest, downpoint a quarter of the points for matching. Look for other non-matching points (e.g. finnage outline) for further consideration. With females, make sure that matching correct as for males - look closely for the odd gravid female in a team because she does not match.

Breeders teams are no more difficult to judge than single fish - possibly they are easier to judge. They just take more time.

#### COLOUR CLASSES

For some reason trainee judges seem to shy away from colour class judging. There is no reason to. It is a particularly straightforward operation. The pointing break down is given on page 16 of the Standards Handbook. Remember that clear-finned females are not eligible for female colour class.

#### EXPERIMENTAL CLASS

This is the only non-competitive class in the FGA schedule. It is also the only class (to date) for which three fish are required. Full details appear on P.12 of the Standards Handbook (show rule 26).

#### JUDGING PRACTICE

Obviously, you will be ager to practise judging on every show occasion but do not overlook the value of a quiet judging session in your own fish room or fish house.

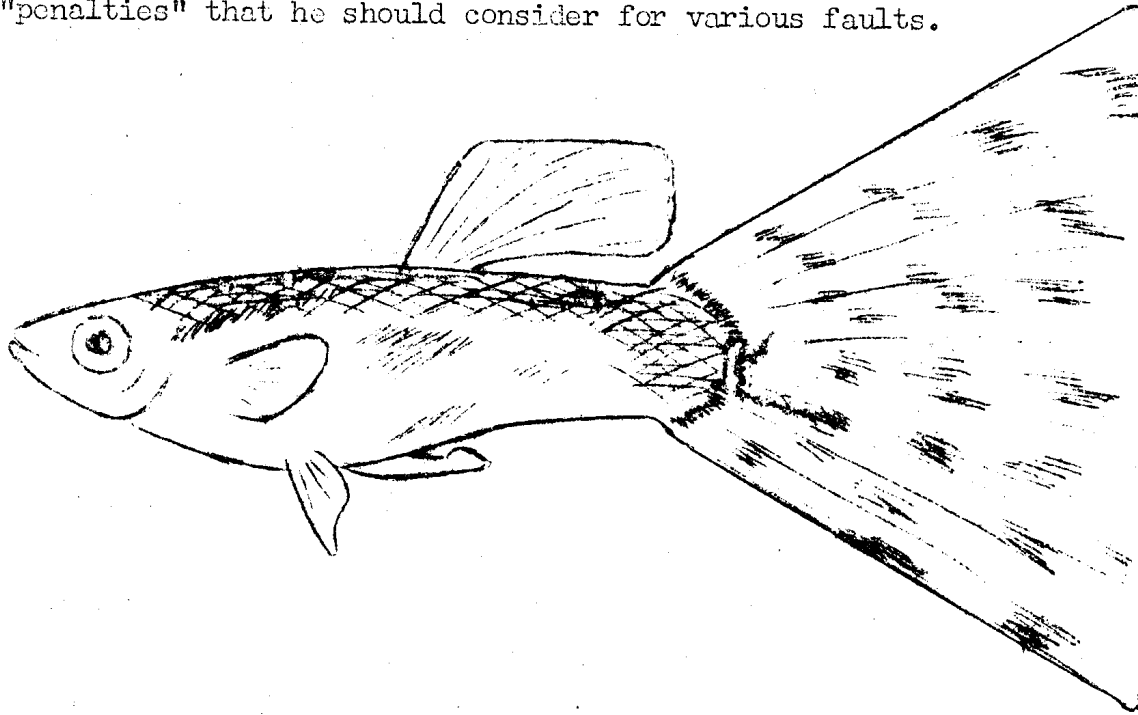
- (a) Select half a dozen fish and jar them separately. Choose fish that are not the best quality because you may find it hard to select the best from a sample of first-class guppies (we assume that as a judge you will ALWAYS have some first-class guppies!)
- (b) Now without doing any pointing, visually select the FOUR that you consider to be the best and push the other two jars to the reat or to the side. You have just GATED the entries. Remember, at shows you do this only when time is pressing. At any other time, point each entry.

- (c) Move the jars about until you have them in what you believe to be order of merit, the best fish to the left and the worst to the right.
- (d) Take your judging board and sheet and fill in the details required (for the purpose of the exercise, make up the show date etc). Don't forget that in a real show, you would check the jar numbers.
- (e) Examine each fish closely and commence to award points. Do your judging in sequence: body (size and shape) first, dorsal (size and shape) second, then caudal (size and shape) followed by colour and condition and deportment. When each of the four fish has been judged tot up the points and fill in the totals at the end of the appropriate columns.
- (f) Check the highest pointed column and pensil a little 1 beneath it, then 2 and so on in order. Now write the jar numbers in the correct order of merit in the spaces to the right of the columns on the judging sheet. If 75 points or over have been scored write STAR? In the square beneath the points columns. Don't worry if your final decisions don't tally with your visual assessment. Closer scrutiny has probably revealed faults not noticed when you were gating and judging visually.

This simple exercise will get you familiar with the judging sheet and will build up your confidence in handling entries at a proper judging session.

JUDGING THE DELTA

This part of the course is based on an article that originally appeared in the FGA Journal, the Association's official organ. The downpointings should be taken as a GUIDE only and not as arbitrary figures. It is intended to indicate to the trainee the order of "penalties" that he should consider for various faults.



DRAWING THREE TIMES STANDARD SIZE

The Body

Apart from size there appear to be three main faults which have appeared on the show bench. These are:-



(a). Bull shoulders

(b). Bull chested

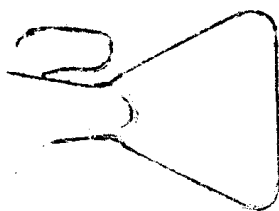
(c). Bent spine.

Faced with these faults in fish on the show bench a judge would, assuming body size is standard, downpoint as follows, (a) and (b) - 5 points, even -6 points if the deformity is very pronounced. These faults are considered quite serious and could be inherited.

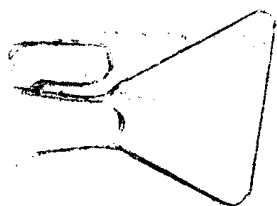
Bent spine: A fish with bent spine has not got it through too high a protein diet (as can happen with Bull chested). It is a bad fish: really knock hard for this, possibly -6 or even -7 for shape. Beware sideways bends which are normally only visible from the top of the jar.



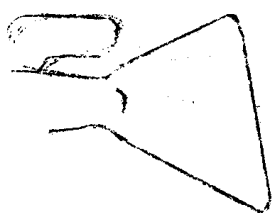
(o) Corners too rounded.



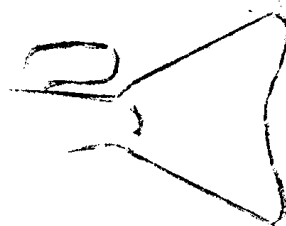
(a) Short lower edge.



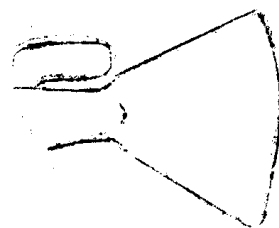
(b) Short upper edge.



(c) Concave rear edge.



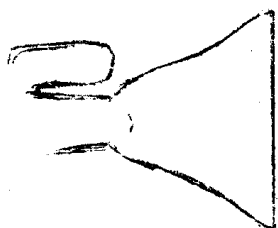
(d) Convex rear edge.



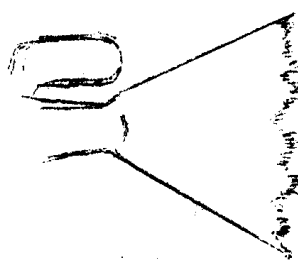
(e) Convex outer edge.



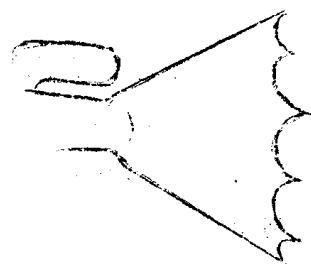
(f) Concave outer edge.



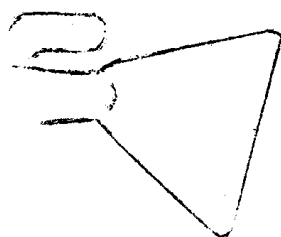
(g) Ragged rear edge.



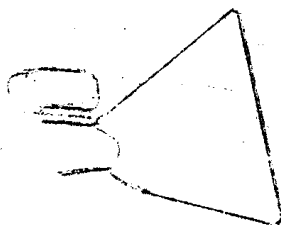
(h) Uneven fin rays.



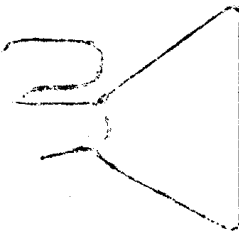
(j) Unbalanced down.



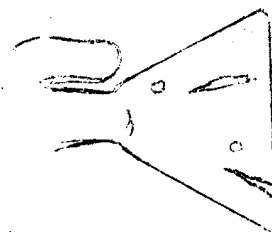
(k) Unbalanced up.



(m) Rays breaking from sides (feathering).



(n) Pin holes, tears & splits.



Delta Caudal Faults

The Dorsal

All too often this fin lets down an otherwise good Delta. By far the most common fault noted here is an overlong dorsal so that it tends to hang down the side of the fish rather than stand erect and spread out, but there are others such as:



(a). Pointed upper edge. (b) Pointed lower edge. (c) Too small.



(d). Pin holes, tears and plits. (e) Fin rays extended. (f) Ragged edge and/or rays broken away.

Down pointing for these faults would probably be as follows: -

(a) and (b) -5 points for shape (c), -3 to -5, depending on how short it was, (d) -4 to -6 depending on the degree of tearing and splits, (e) -2 to -3 points (if, however, this is due to disease as many as 5 points will be lost). (f) similarly for a ragged edge but as many as -4 to -6 points for rays breaking away (feathering).

The Caudal

This fin decides the class in which a fish is placed and faults can be many and varied resulting in loss of points or even disqualification at an Open or National Show. For example a combination of (c) and (e) would rate disqualification, for the fish should have been entered as an S.D.V. and is therefore in the wrong class.

Probable pointing for the faults shown on the opposite page would be as follows:

(a) - (d) up to minus 5 points depending upon the seriousness of the extensions.

Curved upper and lower margins would be viewed less harshly: and the points lost for shape would be -3 to -5 points. Concavity (f) looks worse, but is theoretically, at least, the same as (e). Ragged edge (g) and uneven fin rays could be wear and tear or they could have grown that way, and one would have to be careful. If there is no obvious fungal disease (i.e. fin rot) this could be downpointed on condition or size and shape, depending on cause, possible -2 to -3 points. If obvious disease were the cause, however, downpoint as much as 5 points or disqualify.

(j) and (k) are similar to (a) and (B) so would probably be marked down -5 points also.

Fin rays breaking away as in (m) loss of 4 or 5 points while (n) being rather more serious would possibly lose 4 to 6 points.

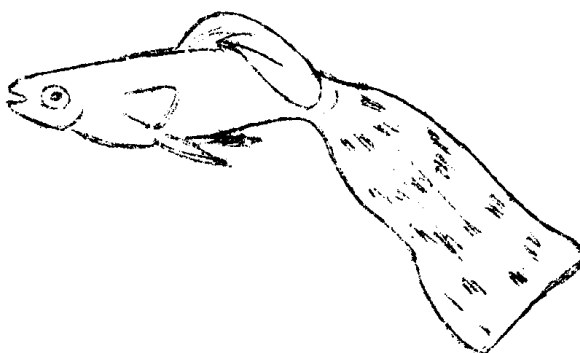
### Colour

There is no specific colour requirement in the Fabcy Guppy Association and the only criteria here are area of colour and intensity of those colours. The show rules break this down into body colour, dorsal colour, and caudal colour with five points allowed for each if the area is completely covered plus five points for intensity of those areas of colour. The main faults under this heading relate to lack of colour at the rear edge of the caudal and dorsal and very often a washed out appearance rather than one of brilliant colour, whatever that colour might be. Remember that irridescient colours only show at their best under the right light.

### Condition and Deportment

It might sound strange to the reader, but he should ensure that each entry has all seven fins plus an intact gonopodium. Fortunately it does not appear to have happened over here, but there are reports from the U.S.A. of the gonopodium being slipped on at least two occasions when the fish were to be auctioned afterwards. Occasionally too, fish appear with scales missing, and even more rare gill covers missing. Look for fin rot and blood marks on the body and particularly at the caudal rear edge.

The fish should swim naturally and with ease, not tail down, and certainly with no sign of wobbles or shimmying.



### Poor Deportment

A fish remaining stationary in the middle of the show jar gets more points if the fins are spread and not clamped, but it is the fish that is very active which will gain the higher marks. One that remains on the bottom of the jar cannot be judged.